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ABSTRACT

This Hudson County Community College (HCCC), New Jersey, Research Profile examines the transfer/graduation careers of three recent cohorts of HCCC students at New Jersey public colleges/universities. Over three-quarters of HCCC students who transfer to public institutions in New Jersey transfer with freshman status. In contrast, fewer than 10% of transfers do so with junior status. For the 3 cohorts, between 46% and 55% of the transfer students graduated within 6 years. For freshman and sophomore transfers, the native graduation rate is higher than the rate for NCCC students, with a 10% difference in graduation rates between native students and NCCC students for freshman transfers: 60.14% of native freshmen graduated within 6 years, while 50.5% of freshman HCCC transfers graduated within 6 years. A more in-depth analysis of who transfers during the first year may provide some indications for intervention prior to transfer. The data presented are based on cohorts at HCCC during the limited period of 1993-1995. During the past 5 years, the Liberal Arts program has become the largest in terms of enrollment and has accounted for one-third (100 of 298) of fiscal year 2002 degrees. This growth, coupled with the institution of an Honors program, may result in different transfer/graduation patterns for more recent HCCC cohorts. (Author/NB)

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Introduction

One of the eight general goals identified in HCCC's Mission Statement is "To provide liberal arts and science courses and associate degree programs that will prepare students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities." In this Research Profile we examine the transfer/graduation careers of three recent cohorts of HCCC students at New Jersey public colleges/universities.

Transfer Status

A well-documented phenomenon among community colleges is that many of their students who transfer do so before they complete their associate degree program. In the words of The Sixth Annual Systemwide Accountability Report (July 2002) of The New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, "more community college students are transferring prior to completing the associate degree" (p. 25).

Over three-quarters of the HCCC students who transfer to senior public institutions in New Jersey transfer with freshman status. In contrast, fewer than 10% of the transfers do so with junior status.

TABLE 1 – Transfer Status of Full-Time, Degree-Seeking HCCC Students Who Entered During Fall 1993, Fall 1994, and Fall 1995

	YEAR							
	1993		1994		1995		Total	
TRANSFER STATUS	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Freshman	71	75.5	72	73.5	101	79.5	244	76.5
Sophomore	20	21.3	20	20.4	14	11.0	54	16.9
Junior	3	3.2	6	6.1	12	9.5	21	6.6
TOTAL	94	100	98	100.0	127	100.0	319	100.0

Graduation Rates

For graduation purposes, 150% of the time for degree is the standard tracking time; six years for four-year degrees and three years for two-year degrees. The data in Table 2 compare graduation rates for HCCC transfers and for students who started at public senior institutions (natives). For the three cohorts, between 46% and 55% of the transfers graduated within six years. Although such combined data for natives is not available, comparative data for students according to transfer status are presented. The N's for Junior transfers (3,6,12) are so small that comparisons are not worth making. For Freshmen and Sophomore transfers, the native graduation rate is higher than the rate for HCCC students. However, in the case of Sophomore transfers, the HCCC graduation rate has improved with each cohort. Given the finding that approximately 75% of the transfers are freshmen, the most significant and reliable rates are rates for those students. There is a 10% difference in graduation rate between these transfers and native students.

TABLE 2 – Six-Year Graduation Rates (%) of Transfer vs. Native Students Who Entered as Full-Time Students During Fall 1993, Fall 1994, and Fall 1995

	YEAR		
	1993	1994	1995
TRANSFER STATUS	(%)	(%)	(%)
Freshman			
Natives	58.0	61.08	60.14
HCCC Transfers	47.9	52.78	50.50
Sophomore			
Natives	73.9	74.88	75.56
HCCC Transfers	35.0	55.00	64.29
Junior			
Natives	85.9	86.49	85.65
HCCC Transfers	66.7	83.33	75.00
All HCCC Transfers	45.7	55.10	54.26

Discussion

The major findings are that for the 1993 – 1995 cohorts, three-quarters of the transfer students transfer as freshmen and transfers are somewhat less likely than are native students at New Jersey public colleges/universities to graduate within six years.

Although transfer prior to completion of degree is commonly found among community college students, the proximity of a low-cost public university, New Jersey City University, probably contributes to this phenomenon at HCCC. A more in-depth analysis of who transfers during the first year may provide some indications for intervention prior to transfer. In terms of proximity of four-year colleges, it is unfortunate that data on transfers to Saint Peter's College are not available through the state's SURE (Student Unit Record Enrollment) system.

Finally, the data presented are based on cohorts at HCCC during a limited time period. During the past five years the Liberal Arts program has become the largest in terms of enrollment and has accounted for one-third (100 of 298) of the FY 2002 degree. This growth coupled with the institution of an Honors Program may result in different transfer/graduation patterns for more recent cohorts.

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